

PROCESS FOR PRODUCING 1-OCTENE FROM BUTADIENE IN THE PRESENCE OF TITANIUM CATALYSTS

The present invention relates to a process for the
10 preparation of 1-octene from butadiene in two steps, more
specifically a first step for the catalytic bis-
hydrodimerization of butadiene to 1,7-octadiene in the
presence of a hydrogen donor, in an aprotic polar solvent,
and a second step for the partial and selective reduction
15 of 1,7-octadiene with hydrogen to 1-octene in the presence
of a catalytic system comprising a titanium compound acti-
vated with an alkyl metal of group 13.

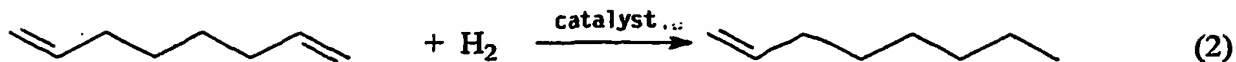
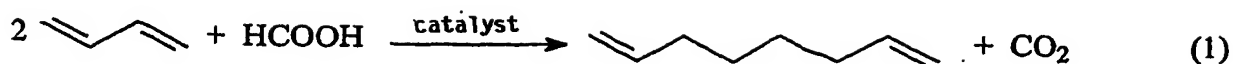
1-octene is widely applied in the field relating to
the production of linear low density polyethylene (LLDPE),
20 a copolymer obtained starting from ethylene and C₄-C₈ 1-
olefins as comonomers, as it imparts improved mechanical
characteristics and a better weldability to the end-
product. It is also applied in the field of plasticizers
after hydroformylation, reduction to linear alcohols and
25 esterification.

The synthesis of 1-octene starting from butadiene is known in the state of the art.

Some patents describe the synthesis of 1-octene from butadiene by means of a three-step process. In US-A-
5 5,030,792, in a first step the catalytic telomerization of butadiene is effected with acetic acid to give 2,7-octadienyl acetate; the latter, in a second step, is hydrogenated to n-octyl acetate which, in turn, in a third step, is pyrolyzed to 1-octene. This type of process is jeopardized by the high number of reaction steps and is also characterized by corrosion problems of the common materials linked to the use of acetic acid.

WO 92/10450 describes the catalytic telomerization of butadiene with an alcohol such as methanol or ethanol to
15 give 2,7-octadienyl ether. The latter, in a second step, is hydrogenated to octyl ether which, in turn, in a third step, is pyrolyzed to 1-octene. Although it avoids the use of corrosive carboxylic acids, this type of process is also jeopardized by the high number of reaction steps and an
20 lower overall selectivity.

Finally, WO 03/31378 describes the synthesis of 1-octene in only two steps starting from butadiene according to the scheme of equations (1) and (2)



5 In the first step of the described process, the catalytic bis-hydrodimerization of butadiene to 1,7-octadiene is effected with a reducing agent such as formic acid. In the second step, the partial catalytic hydrogenation is carried out, of 1,7-octadiene to 1-octene.

10 Although the process described in WO 03/31378 has the advantage, with respect to the previous processes, of reducing to two, the number of steps necessary for producing 1-octene from butadiene, it has numerous drawbacks and in particular the necessity of using, both in the first and in
15 the second step, high quantities of costly noble metals as catalysts.

20 The first step of the process of WO 03/31378 is carried out according to a reaction known in literature, i.e. the bis-hydrodimerization of butadiene in the presence of formic acid and catalysts based on palladium and phosphines. The reaction described is, in all cases, scarcely selective, with the formation of mixtures of 1,6-octadiene and 1,7-octadiene or 1,3,7-octatriene, and the yields and catalytic efficiency, moreover, are low.

25 Furthermore, it is necessary to use high quantities of

catalyst, with molar ratios between the butadiene and palladium ranging from about 1000 to 2000, which create problems relating to the cost and recovery of the catalyst. If the concentration of catalyst is reduced to lower values, the selectivity to 1,7-octadiene decreases.

From what is specified above, it would appear necessary to avail of a more efficient process for the hydrodimerization of butadiene which allows high conversions and selectivities to 1,7-octadiene to be reached, also when operating with reduced concentrations of noble metal.

The second step of the process described in WO 03/31378 consists in the partial hydrogenation of 1,7-octadiene to 1-octene. The reaction, as described in WO 03/31378, i.e. carried out with a supported catalyst based on ruthenium in heterogeneous phase, suffers from an extremely low catalytic activity. Very long reaction times, in the order of over 24 hours, are in fact required for obtaining a conversion of 1,7-octadiene of 70% and a selectivity to 1-octene of 60%, and furthermore, it does not avoid the formation of isomer olefins. Also in this case, the quantity of catalyst used (or supported ruthenium) is much higher, due to the low catalytic activity of the catalyst adopted.

The necessity is therefore felt, also for this step, for a more efficient and more selective partial reduction

of the 1,7-octadiene, even when operating with low quantities of catalyst.

A process has now been found for the preparation of 1-octene starting from butadiene, which overcomes the above
5 drawbacks.

In accordance with this, the present invention relates to a process in two steps for the preparation of 1-octene starting from butadiene which comprises:

** a first step (a) in which the bis-hydrodimerization of
10 butadiene to 1,7-octadiene is effected in the presence of a catalyst based on palladium containing one or more tri-substituted monodentate phosphines, the molar ratio palladium/phosphines ranging from 3 to 50, more preferably from 5 to 30, in an aprotic polar solvent optionally containing
15 an organic base; the above first step being carried out in the presence of a hydrogen donor, preferably formic acid, preferably in a stoichiometric ratio of 1:2 molar with respect to the butadiene;

** a second step (b) in which the partial catalytic hydrogenation of 1,7-octadiene, recovered at the end of the
20 first step, to 1-octene, is effected; the above hydrogenation being carried out under hydrogen pressure or mixtures of hydrogen and nitrogen, in the presence of a catalyst; the above process being characterized in that in step (b)
25 the catalyst is selected from titanium compounds in the

presence of activators selected from one or more metal alkyls of group 13 (i.e. selected from boron, aluminum, gallium, indium).

With respect to the first step (a), i.e. the bis-
5 hydrodimerization of butadiene to 1,7-octadiene, the palladium-based catalyst is preferably selected from palladium carboxylates, even more preferably from palladium pivalate and $\text{Pd}(\text{acetate})_2$. As far as the phosphine is concerned, typical examples are triphenyl phosphine, tri(o-
10 tolyl)phosphine, (3-sulfonatephenyl) diphenyl phosphine, tricyclohexyl phosphine, trimethyl phosphine, triethyl phosphine, triisopropyl phosphine, tributyl phosphine, and mixed phosphines methyl diphenyl phosphine, dimethyl phenyl phosphine, singly or combined with each other. Triphenyl
15 phosphine is preferred.

Again with respect to the first step, typical examples of aprotic polar solvents are disubstituted amides, for example dimethyl formamide, or disubstituted cyclic ureas, for example dimethyl ethylene urea or dimethyl propylene
20 urea and the relative mixtures.

As far as the organic base is concerned, typical examples are pyridines, N-alkyl morpholines, trialkyl amines. In the preferred embodiment, the organic base is triethyl amine.

25 The first step is carried out in the presence of a hy-

drogen donor, preferably in a stoichiometric ratio of 1:2 molar with respect to the butadiene, see equation (1), or slightly lower. The hydrogen donor is preferably formic acid.

5 The butadiene is used in an initial weight ratio ranging from 1:10 to 10:1 with respect to the solvent, more preferably from 1:5 to 5:1.

 The molar ratio between the organic base, for example triethyl amine and the hydrogen donor, for example formic
10 acid, can vary from 0 to 1.5, more preferably from 0.2 to 1.3, and even more preferably from 0.4 to 0.8.

 The reaction is carried out at temperatures ranging from 50 to 120°C, preferably from 70 to 100°C, preferably under a nitrogen pressure ranging from 0.5-2 MPa, more
15 preferably from 0.8 to 1.5 MPa.

 The duration of the reaction of step (a) indicatively ranges from 10 to 180 minutes, more preferably from 15 to 120 minutes.

 According to the above process, in the first step, it
20 is possible to improve the selectivity to 1,7-octadiene even in the presence of an extremely reduced quantity of catalyst, for example such that the initial molar ratio butadiene/palladium ranges from 5,000 to 1,000,000, preferably from 20,000 to 200,000, without significantly reducing
25 the conversion of the butadiene, which is maintained high.

At the end of the first step, the reaction product 1,7-octadiene can be recovered according to the conventional techniques. More specifically, in a preferred embodiment of the invention, after the recovery of the butadiene, the reaction product is separated by demixing, exploiting the fact that 1,7-octadiene is not miscible in all ratios in the pre-selected solvent, for example dimethyl formamide, whereas the lower phase, comprising the solvent, optional organic base and catalyst, can be recycled to the reaction. The upper hydrocarbon phase, prevalently consisting of 1,7-octadiene, can be purified from the non-hydrocarbon residues by washing with water; the 1,7-octadiene is subsequently purified with conventional methods, for example by distillation.

According to an aspect of the invention, the carbon dioxide, co-produced in a stoichiometric quantity when formic acid is used as hydrogen donor, can be hydrogenated again to formic acid with hydrogen, to be then recycled to the reaction. The hydrogenation of carbon dioxide to formic acid is carried out, for example, as described in *Nature*, vol. 368, March 17, 1994, page 231.

Operating according to the process object of the invention, the second step of the process, i.e. the partial catalytic hydrogenation of 1,7-octadiene to 1-octene, is carried out in the presence of a catalyst consisting of a

titanium compound activated with one or more metal alkyls of group 13 (i.e. selected from boron, aluminum, gallium, indium).

The metal alkyl is preferably an aluminum alkyl.

5 Titanium compounds suitable for the purpose are tetra-alcoholates having the general formula $Ti(OR)_4$, wherein $R = CH_3$, C_2H_5 , propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl, t-butyl, Ph or complexes having the general formula $(Cp)_nTiX_m$ wherein $Cp =$ cyclopentadienyl, $n+m = 4$, $n = 1$ or 2 , $X = Cl$, Br ,
10 CH_2Ph , $N(R)_2$, or OR , wherein R has the meaning defined above. More preferably, titanium compounds are selected from $Ti(OtBu)_4$, $Ti(EtO)_4$ and Cp_2TiCl_2 .

Aluminum alkyls suitable for the purpose are aluminum trialkyls and alkyl alumoxanes, for example $Al(CH_3)_3$,
15 (TMA), $Al(CH_2CH_3)_3$ (TEA), $Al(CH_2CH_2(CH_3)_2)_3$ (TIBA), $AlH(CH_2CH_2(CH_3)_2)_2$ (DIBAH) and methyl aluminoxane (MAO).

In a preferred embodiment, the hydrogenation reaction is carried out in a solution of hydrocarbon solvents. The hydrocarbon solvent is preferably selected from those in
20 which the catalyst and relative activator are both soluble. As an example, solvents suitable for the hydrogenation are: C_5 - C_{14} aliphatic hydrocarbons, C_5 - C_{12} cyclo-aliphatic hydrocarbons, C_6 - C_{12} aromatic or alkyl aromatic hydrocarbons, or their mixtures.

25 When a solvent is used, the diene is contained in the

solvent in a ratio of 5 to 90% by weight, more preferably from 10 to 80% by weight.

The catalyst is added to the reaction in a molar ratio with respect to the diene ranging from 1/100 to 1/100,000, preferably from 1/1,000 to 1/10,000, whereas the activator is used in a molar ratio with respect to the catalyst ranging from 1/1 to 10,000/1, more preferably from 1/1 to 2000/1.

The reaction is generally carried out at a temperature ranging from 0°C to 150°C, preferably from 50°C to 120°C. This range represents the field of temperatures in which the catalytic system has the minimum isomerization activity of the double bond compatible with a good reaction rate.

The reaction is generally carried out under hydrogen pressure or mixtures of hydrogen and nitrogen, preferably in the presence of hydrogen alone, at a pressure ranging from 0.05 to 10 MPa, preferably from 0.1 to 3 MPa.

The reaction time ranges from 1 to 400 minutes, more preferably from 5 to 120 minutes.

In order to limit the consecutive hydrogenation reaction of 1-octene to octane, the reaction is preferably carried out at a partial conversion of 1,7-octadiene lower than 80%, preferably ranging from 40 to 60%.

When the conversion value is within this range, selectivities to 1-octene are obtained, generally ranging from

75 to 90%. Furthermore, when operating according to the invention, the other isomers of 1-octene and 1,7-octadiene are normally absent, or in any case are formed with an overall selectivity generally lower than 2%.

5 The present invention is now described in detail by means of a few examples.

EXAMPLES

Synthesis of 1,7-octadiene

Examples 1 to 5

10 The following products are placed, in the order indicated and in the quantities specified in Table 1 or hereunder, in a Hastelloy C autoclave having a volume of 300 ml and equipped with a mechanical stirring system and heating system: 45 ml of dimethyl formamide (DMF) as solvent, 15 ml
15 of triethyl amine, formic acid (concentration 99% by weight) in a stoichiometric quantity (0.5 moles/mole) with respect to the butadiene, $\text{Pd}(\text{CH}_3\text{COO})_2$ as catalyst and triphenylphosphine as ligand. Finally, the autoclave is closed and 20 g of butadiene are added. The autoclave is
20 pressurized with nitrogen at 0.1 MPa and the heating is initiated to a temperature of 90°C for 90 minutes. At the end, the autoclave is cooled, the contents are treated with water and sodium bicarbonate and are extracted with cyclohexane. The products are quantified by gas chromatography
25 with the internal standard method. The conversion of buta-

diene and selectivities referring to the butadiene converted are indicated in Table 1.

	Molar ratio PPh ₃ / Pd	Molar ratio BD / Pd	Conversion % BD	Selectivity % 1,6-octadiene	Selectivity % 1,7-octadiene
Example 1 comparative	2	2128	77	21	77
Example 2	19	1627	82	9	89
Example 3 comparative	2	22457	46	17	83
Example 4	10	22258	77	10	90
Example 5	21	23526	61	10	89

Table 1 very clearly shows that the use of phosphine/Pd molar ratio values according to the invention has the effect of increasing the selectivity to 1,7-octadiene and also makes it possible to use an extremely reduced quantity of catalyst without significantly jeopardizing the butadiene conversion, which is maintained high.

With the same BD/Pd ratio, in fact, (comparative example 1 vs. example 2, and comparative example 3 vs. examples 4 and 5) the increase in the molar ratio PPh₃/Pd allows a better yield and high selectivity to be obtained.

Hydrogenation of 1,7-octadiene to 1-octene

Examples 6 to 10

The following products are placed, in the order indicated and in the type and quantities specified in Table 2 or hereunder, in a glass flask having a volume of 250 ml, put under Argon: 100 ml of toluene as solvent, the quantity of 1,7-octadiene (1,7-OD) necessary for reaching the de-

sired 1,7-OD/catalyst ratio, 0.03 mmoles of catalyst, the activator and finally the titanium catalyst, in order.

The products are left in contact for about 30 minutes in an inert atmosphere and the whole mixture is then transferred to a Hastelloy C autoclave having a volume of 300 ml, equipped with heat exchange devices and a mechanical stirring system, leaving a slight overpressure of argon. The autoclave is heated to the desired temperature (see Table 2), hydrogen is then introduced at a pressure of 2 MPa and the autoclave is connected to a make-up system of the hydrogen used up. A representative sample of the contents of the autoclave is taken at pre-fixed times and is subjected to gas chromatographic analysis, using the internal standard method, to determine the residual 1,7-octadiene, the 1-octene product, the 1-octane co-product and diene and monoene isomers. The selectivities refer to the 1,7-octadiene converted. The results are indicated in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Example nr.	Catalyst / Activator	Molar ratios		T °C	t min	conv. % 1,7-OD	Sel. % 1-octene	Sel. % octane	Sel. % isomers
		Catalyst / Activator	1,7-OD / Catalyst						
6	(Cp) ₂ TiCl ₂ / DIBAH	1/24	2945	50	10	2%	100%	2%	0%
				50	30	16%	92%	9%	0%
				50	60	43%	82%	19%	0%
				50	120	70%	67%	33%	0%
7	(Cp) ₂ TiCl ₂ / MAO	1/47	3290	50	10	35%	85%	15%	0%
				50	30	60%	75%	26%	0%
				50	60	79%	59%	41%	0%
8	(Cp) ₂ TiCl ₂ / TIBA	1/50	3470	53	5	20%	98%	10%	0%
				51	15	37%	88%	16%	0%
				50	35	54%	79%	24%	0%
				50	95	67%	70%	32%	0%
9	Ti(tButO) ₄ / TIBA	1/14	3459	50	15	24%	87%	11%	2%
				50	45	46%	80%	19%	1%
				50	90	64%	71%	28%	1%
				50	150	73%	64%	34%	2%
10	Ti(EtO) ₄ / MAO	1/100	3459	63	5	44%	82%	17%	0%

tBut = C(CH₃)₃, Et = C₂H₅, Cp = cyclopentadienyl, TIBA = Al.(CH₂CH₂(CH₃)₂)₃.

DIBAH = AlH (CH₂CH₂(CH₃)₂)₂, MAO = methyl aluminoxane

Table 2 clearly shows that, when operating according to the invention, the partial reduction of 1,7-octadiene to 1-octene takes place in the absence of or with extremely low isomerization levels.

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